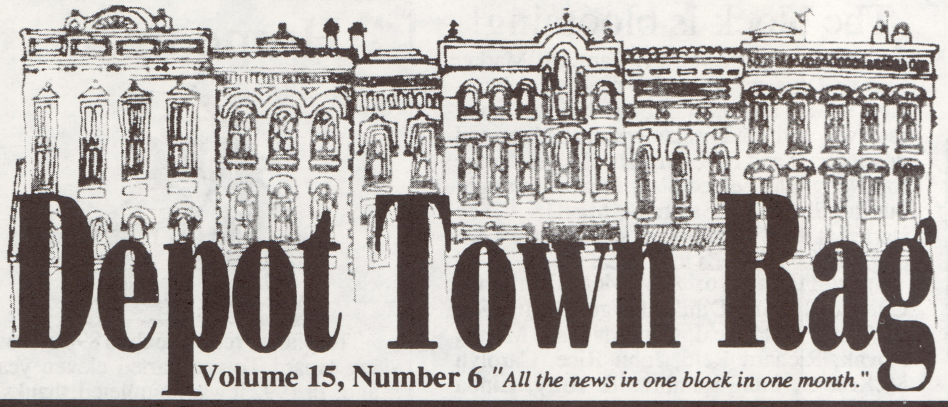

Depot Town Rag

Volume 15, Number 6 *"All the news in one block in one month."*

100% FREE Rag content

June 1992

- **Which local history group?**
- Decor ugly? News bureau blames us!
- *Highway mentality*
- **County VCB coming?**

and other strictly local stuff. . . .

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
JUN 12 1992

Biggest program, yet! The Ark is pleased to announce that the eleventh annual Frog Island Festival will be held on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, June 19, 20 and 21, 1992. It will take place, rain or shine, under a large tent by the Huron River in Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town.

Children 12 and under are admitted free. Picnic baskets and blankets are welcome. Food booths will serve ethnic and all-American fare; there will be refreshments and a cash bar.

The Festival runs from 5 pm until midnight on Friday, noon 'til midnight on Saturday, and noon 'til 10 pm on Sunday.

Frog Island 1992

The district's classiest backyard party, yet!

Friday, June 19

4 pm Gates open

5 pm Percy Gabriel's New Orleans Jazz Band: Gabriel, a New Orleans native, has led the metropolitan Detroit area's most authentic traditional jazz band for 40 years.

7 pm The Rebirth Brass Band: These eight New Orleans natives have updated the venerable brass band tradition with highly danceable infusions of funk and rhythm and blues. A Michigan debut.

8:30 pm Al Rapone & Zydeco Express: Years ago, Rapone taught his sister Ida how to play the accordion. Now she's Queen Ida and Rapone has a sizzling up-and-coming band of his own.

10:15 Terrance Simien & The Mallet Playboys: As his appearance at last year's Frog Fest demonstrated, Simien can rock the house as hard an anyone. He's an accordion virtuoso and a galvanizing singer.

Saturday, June 20

11 am Gates open

Noon The Gwen Laster Sextet: the violinist's band features veteran Detroiters David McMurray on saxophone and Larry Fratangelo on percussion. Their blend of contemporary and straight-ahead jazz won the prestigious 1992 Hennessy Cognac Jazz Search.

1:30 pm Harvey Thompson's Vocal Summit: Thompson, who's performed in Japan and Europe, will join forces with the Jimmy Wilkins Orchestra's Joan Crawford and Straight Ahead's Cynthia Dewberry for a revue-style show with a hot, horn-powered backup band.

3 pm Kenn Cox & The Guerilla Jam Band: Pianist and composer Cox has recorded for Blue Noe Records and is one of Detroit's most talented musicians. His ten Guerillas bring his evocative writing to vivid life.

4:30 pm Bobby Watson and Horizons: A stellar Art Blakey alum, his alto saxophone has earned wide acclaim. His award-winning Blue Note discs with Horizons have just clinched a deal with Columbia Records. A Michigan Premiere.

6:30 pm Motor City Boogie Queens: Take Detroit's three most poll-winning blues divas (Juanita Mc Cray, Zoom and Thornetta Davis), add an all star Motor City horn band, and it's guaranteed blues fireworks — a Frog Island Exclusive.

8:30 pm The Holmes Brothers: After a quarter century on the east coast club circuit, these gospel-rooted, wonderfully traditionalist bluesmen are emerging as the national treasures that they are.

10:30 pm Koko Taylor & her Blues Machine: The hardest-belting, most powerful woman in modern blues.

Sunday, June 21

11 am Gates open

Noon The Second Ebeneezer Baptist Church Youth Choir: Fifty voices strong, this award winning group from Detroit's east side thrilled the Frog Island audience with its heaven-storming music in 1990.

1 pm The Holmes Brothers: Few blues bands are as deeply influenced by gospel music. They will celebrate their rich roots in this very special, one-of-a-kind sacred concert — a Frog Island Exclusive.

2:30 pm Roy Brooks' M'Jumbe: Brooks, knowr. for his galvanizing drumming, is also a creative composer and and orchestrator. He premiers his brand new band, a jazz quintet augmented with harp, steel drums and vibraphones. A Frog Island Exclusive.

4 pm Rara Machine: Haiti's *voudon* tradition runs deep in this colorful, kinetic eleven piece group that employs chanting, singing, drumming and cooking virtuoso instrumentalists to create a contemporary, yet timeless message. A Midwestern Debut.

6 pm Vinx: Easily the most distinctive percussionist in pop music, Vinx has parlayed his recording and touring with Sting into his own quite special — and irresistibly danceable — percussion band.

8 pm Arrow: His hit record "Hot Hot Hot" quickly became an anthem for calypso and soca fans. Fronting a spectacular 10-piece horn band, Arrow is at the forefront of the new wave of Carribean dance bands.

"This Renaissance Detroit can't enter; Of local history, we're the center . . ."

This month's *Rag* features features featured in other local publications in the past month: *The Heritage News*, the *CBC Monthy Newsletter* and the *Ann Arbor News Bureau*. Perhaps one of the historical facts most taken for granted in Our Town is that we've always taken full advantage of the First Amendment down here.

See *The Rag's* Frog Island Program Book this month, too. You just can't argue with a neighborhood association that buys ink by the barrel!

You can get in free!

For volunteer opportunities at the Frog Island Jazz Fest:

See page 5

Support our sponsors who support *The Rag*

Baked On Automotive Finishes • Complete Collision Repair
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20 E. Cross Street
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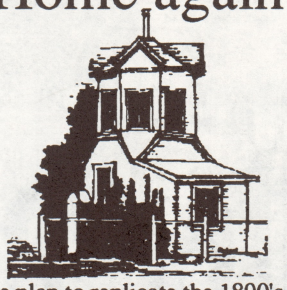
The block is blooming!

Crowds overflowed the Farmers' Market Flower Days on several consecutive Saturdays in May and most of those blooms found their way to the many planters and beds up and down Cross and River Streets. Thanks to the following who helped plant flowers throughout the district on Saturday, May 16. They started at 9 am and finished by noon for a hot dog lunch. The beds look great.

Special thanks to: Amy McMillian, Jerry Curtis, Bonnie Dunkelberger, Christine McClure, Todd Reid, Cindy Novak, Marian Novak, Richard Reid, John Rice, Carolyn McKeever, Pam Hamblin & Amy, Linda French, Paul Fetters, Paul Giles

At the same time, hammering could be heard from the crossing where Engine Clubbers, Dave Davis and other loyal carpenters put the finishing touches on the newly replicated Crossing Guard Tower, readying it for the final coat of paint which will complete the 'destination sign' for the block.

Home again!



The plan to replicate the 1890's Crossing Guard Tower started eleven years ago. In 1992 it was completed, thanks to many, many friends of Depot Town who gave their weekends to make it a reality once more. A plaque will soon be installed, but probably the best' thank you' is the smile it causes every time one of those helpers walks or drives by.

The Tower is truly Ypsilanti's second exclamation point!! Thanks to all.

From the home decorating newsfront:

Grosse Pointe's gross points are *our* fault! So there!

If it wasn't for *bad* taste, we might not have *any taste* at all.

Roger Green of the *Ann Arbor News Bureau*, has travelled to far-off Grosse Pointe to comment on the Junior League's annual Festival of Bad Taste (*Ann Arbor News*, 17 May 1992, *Show house gains glitz, loses spirit*).

After bemoaning the labored and hokey interiors which 32 'designers' installed in the former Crowley (of Crowley, Milner department stores) mansion, Green asks, "Who is to blame?"

Not the Junior League of Detroit, with their several worthy causes. Nor the designers who, after all, donated all this overblown stuffiness to augment that half-timbered pile of ostentation. No. It's our fault, "the secure, self-satisfied public. . . " who, Green says, "should know better." He could be right.

The writer even claims 'racism' in the decor of one particular fireplace niche. How very Ann Arbor! But where is the review of the tent interiors of Ann Arbor's Salvation City of the past few months? No one from the 'fashion pages' found those living spaces interesting enough to review.

Still, local tastemakers in Depot Town are ready to apologize for Grosse Pointe and take their share of the blame in the name of J.Q. Public. It's all our fault. We've seen so many Taupe Town Condos out by the freeway that the ocean of glass-topped and chrome-legged tea tables has ruined our judgment. And those model homes in Neo-Tudor Mauve City have bamboozled us with the 'French Country Look' somewhere between here and the parking lot of the newest and needless shopping center. We've been lost in a sea of grapevine wreaths and a tangle of macramé bird cages from the Art Fair and it's difficult to find the Sunday papers in this miasma of klutzy kitch.

Granted, the very poor and the very rich have always been famous for their bad taste. It's the Great Middle Class that really has the classiest home decorating touch. Ypsilanti's East Side is a great example of such good taste and the best time to document this good sense of design is right at dusk — when residents need to turn on interior lights to read, but it's still light enough to see the flower beds and front porches on the outside. There's no need to wait for next year's home tour around Depot Town; just stroll the sidewalks and nod a pleasant 'hello' to the folks sitting on their porches. You can give them 'honorary plaques' of your own.

While less secure neighborhoods hold an annual holiday on which to turn on their porch lights, these front yards and walkways are lighted the year 'round and they invite intimate inspection and friendliness among the participants.

Not many of those 32 Detroit designers have parked their vans in front of these humble residences, but virtually none of the floral plantings clash with the sky and the front windows show amazing restraint in their interior design. Who needs the 'slicker mags' with their trend-setting displays of *horror vacuui*? (The Egyptian fear of 'open space' in their design elements.)

Probably Ypsilanti's greatest taste risk was placed on the East Side just to give contrast to the careful design of the working people. The Hutchinson House (High Scope's world headquarters) at River and Forest Streets, moved out a block of beautiful middle class domiciles to create the city's largest display of rambling eclectism. Most neighbors agree: it's a good background for the common sense and good taste of the rest of the neighborhood. Think of the option of contrasting in the other direction: Who would want to plant a lovely garden and paint the trim on a cottage next to a toxic land fill?

Better yet, imagine Depot Town plopped right at the edge of Grosse Pointe! The contrast might do those Detroit east-siders some good. But, we wonder, how has that town survived so prosperously without a railroad all these years?

Commercial/residential history seems to leap frog generations

Does the highway mentality rule us?

America's first seaports were originally fishing villages, trade centers, *and* residential communities. But, as trade and commerce grew, such busy places were not seen as the kind of neighborhoods in which to raise a family. Yet, as the fishing moved to giant international cartel factory processing ships, many of the seaside canneries became *chi chi* restaurants and folks moved back to the old commercial buildings to live and shop. Pilings and fishing nets and anchors became decorating accessories to place along the sidewalks to give an air of authenticity. A local seafood store on Washtenaw Avenue blinks port and starboard lanterns along its wooden dock/entry. Watch your step. You could fall into the asphalt canal that leads to the fishing fleet.

With the advent of the industrial revolution, it was difficult to believe that anyone would ever want to live and shop in those smoky, old depot districts and railroad yards — but here we are! Some wonder at the presence of the old caboose out on the end of a disconnected spur line, and the newly replicated Crossing Guard Tower contains no signal controls; it's just a 'destination sign' to carry out the 'railroad theme' in the neighborhood.

Now we wonder if anyone will ever hold the same sentiment for the Eisenhower Interstates? Some will say the success of Jack Miller's somewhere-in-time Hudson dealership is a good case in point, but Miller Motors harkens from the days when the car dealer was a part of the central business district, not out by the freeway interchange.

Once the internal combustion engine passes, will we see cute little boutiques springing up in former corner gas stations? (Drive Michigan Avenue to Deaborn, and you'll see it's already happening!)Will Historic District Ordinances work to save the culture of the automatic car wash, the auto parts store and the forty-acre parking lot? Will auto junk yards become the new 'antique row?' Car Clubbers who've converged upon the block in the past month indicate that this is happening as we speak.

When travel becomes electric — or nuclear or magnetic or cosmic — will we have found any use for those old rubber tires that kept piling up back when every family seemed to have at least three grease-dropping automobiles for 'basic transporation?'

Followers of popular music know that each new consumer generation finds a new style based purely on how it will be found offensive by the previous consumer generation — their parents. Perhaps astute trend followers are already buying up the airports, terminals and hangars in anticipation of the day when those spaces will be seen as a 'new wave' of what's 'in.' Who knows, maybe we'll see a new shopping center at the Yankee Air Force and glitzy condos rising where Willow Village once stood.

Please include me among the members of

The Depot Town Association, Inc.

Name _____

Street _____

City_____State_____ZIP _____

I'm available to help with Association projects. Call me at _____

Annual dues:

- o $25 Regular Member (Property or business owner)
- o $10 Associate Member (Interested in and supportive)
- o $100 Life Member (A great deal if you had joined in 1976!)

- o Please place my name on the monthly mailing list of *The Depot Town Rag*
- o Don't mail *The Rag*. I'll pick it up in the neighborhood.

$ Clip and send check to "Depot Town Association"

Guarantee
Your support makes a difference!

c/o The Old Caboose
400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

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June 19, 20, 21

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Friday: noon - dusk, **Saturday:** 9am - 3pm

Depot Doo

Fine Design In Hair Style
25 East Cross • 484-3045

Depot Town Association, Inc., 21 May 1992

DTA: Firmly rooted in the past - with a clear view forward!

May's monthly DTA meeting was held in the open air of the Market Plaza, due to pleasant weather. Marian Novak kept the minutes in the absence of the secretary.

The April minutes were read and approved as published.

Treasury: $1580.68 in General Fund.

- Delux Rental's bill of $302 from the April Jazz event is paid.
- Paul Giles will send a letter to Comfort Inn regarding cancellation of rooms.
- Greg Dodd has called The Ark concerning final payment for the Frog Island concept. Ark's Dave Siglin plans to contact DTA August 2nd regarding the matter. After than time, DTA will take a 'more aggressive' approach.

Rag Report:

- Only paid ads will be printed in *The Rag*. Judi Monaghan will follow up on billings and collect past due payments.
- Motion approved to reduce *The Rag* to four pages. (Income indicates that this month's payments will support the usual format; four-pager will start in July if necessary)
- Editor needs to report and reinforce the need for businesses to support *The Rag* - which supports them. (See below).

Heritage Festival:

- Steve Gross reports Festival Committee's verbal pledge of funding for August's Heritage Jazz Competition.
- DTA will submit a request for running the parking concession for the 1993 Heritage Festival. Marian Novak will chair the committee to investigate the responsibility. They will meet Friday, May 22 at 7pm. (Bill French, Carolyn McKeever, Paul Giles).

A possible fall fund-raising event was discussed with some direction from Amy McMillian anc coordination with the City.

Possible district improvements coming may include:

- $1000 for maintenance - Bill French
- Drinking fountain - Dave Blackmer
- X-mas banners - Carolyn McKeever
- Kiosk - Richard Reid, Paul Giles
- Caboose Repair (most recent bid= $5700) - Gary McKeever

Crossing Guard Landscaping saw several plans. The proposal for a walkway around four sides of the building with lighting was accepted. Richard Reid and Paul Giles will contact depot owners re: using more of their property than approved in the Tower's easement agreement for additional landscaping.

Commitment's two-way street

The thousands of folks who see themselves as the 'loyal clientele' of Ypsilanti's old railroad district are accustomed to seeing the advertisements included in this little monthly newsletter and they note changes and follow the growth of the neighborhood by additions and subtractions to the publication. Some might think they're real ads - like in the dailies - but the cost and hyper-anxiety of those commerical announcements is certainly different from what we see in these pages.

One of our neighbors reports spending more on advertising each year than on rent. Certainly the ten bucks a month to *The Rag* is one of the smallest budget items he faces, but the feed-back to the business is also one of the greatest.

A few of the loyal sponsors of *The Rag* include monthly specials and they report high response from their customers. Specials such as this month's Frog/Jazz/Green theme are created locally and announced locally -- with great effect upon the traffic during the time such specials are run on the block. Somehow, an advertising and promotions director from some outside company can 't create the same effect, though they've certainly tried.

Some may giggle at our corny, local stance, but it has worked for Depot Town for one hundred and sixty years now. Why mess with a formula that's been so successful?

One of our newest and most visible local boosters points out that his company's sponsorship of *The Rag* is pure reciprocity: "The businesses of the block should support *The Rag*, simply because *The Rag* has been the biggest supporter of the block for so long," he points out.

True, no other publication has invested fifteen and a half years into the constant promotion of this -- or any other - commercial block in Southeastern Michgian.

Perhaps it's that steady regularity that pays off for the paper as well as the district. Our readers are so accustomed to picking up *The Rag* on the first Saturday of the month from their favorite place on the block that they don't even reach for Ameritech's *Yellow Pages* when they need to call one of us. From the predictabale monthly format they have become accustomed to in *The Rag*, they know the phone numbers and vital statistics will always be included with the familiar local logotypes of Depot Town in each month's publication.

Reading May's DTA minutes (above) will show how district activists requested that this point be made once more, just in case there's anyone who hasn't figured it out yet: We support *The Rag* because *The Rag* supports us. It's that simple!

Magnetic Fluid Conditioning
Residential, Commerical & Industrial
EARN $500-$200 per month Part Time
Gerald French: 482-2343 after 7:00 pm

Strictly local stuff:

June 1992

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of this old commercial district:

Depot Town Association
7:30 p.m. Thursday, 18th
The Old Caboose

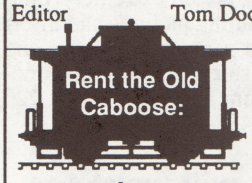
Depot Town Antique Engine Club
7:30 pm, Thursday 25th
Freighthouse Coffeeshop

1991-1992 DTA officers

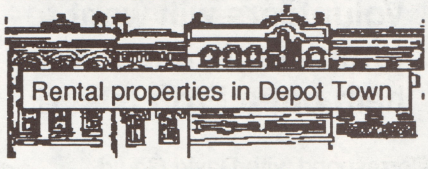
President	A. William French	483-1870
Vice president	Dave Blackmer	485-7546
Secretary	Sandee French	483-1870
Treasurer	Bettie Dodd	482-6371

DTA Sitting Committees

Membership	Bettie Dodd	482-6371
Events	Carolyn McKeever	483-4256
Rag sales	Dave Blackmer	485-7546
New sponsors	Judi Monaghan	485-4851
Freighthouse	Margaret Harner	482-6373
Heritage Festival	Steve Gross	482-1780
Editor	Tom Dodd	482-6371



($25 + deposit)
Call 483-4256.



RETAIL SPACE
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Call 483-4256

Contact the DepotTown Clearing House at 482-1279 for a great selection of local rental opportunities.

THE DEPOT TOWN RAG

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.

-Tom Dodd, editor

The Depot Town Association, Inc.
A. William French, president
c/o The Old Caboose
400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

History in Ypsilanti:
The Society, the Foundation, and the District Commission

Three important local groups committed to preservation

[*Heritage News*, the newsletter of the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation., May 1992]

Three separate groups in Ypsilanti work to promote awareness of history and architecture in the community: the Ypsilanti Historical Society, the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation, and the Historic District Commission. Many people, residents as well as newcomers, still seem confused about the specific functions of each group. We hope the following will clarify:

I. The Ypsilanti Historical Society

is a membership organization, open to all interested persons, whose chief interest in history in terms of people and events. Founded in 1965, the Historical Society operates the Historical Museum and Archives and gathers facts and artifacts related to Ypsilanti history. Ypsilanti is very fortunate to have both a City Historian and a City Archivist. In the 1950's Ypsilanti City Council created the position of City Historian, a position which was first filled by Louis White, then by Foster Fletcher, and now by Doris Milliman. The City Historian, who has the duty to collect and preserve items of historical interest to the Ypsilanti area, is appointed from a list of nominees recommended by the Historical Society. The City Archivist is employed by the City and that position is currently held by Billie Zolkosky. The Historical Museum collections were first housed in the old Quirk mansion at 206 North Huron, later moved to the basement of the building which is now the Ypsilanti District Library, and, in 1970, moved into the City-owned historical house at 220 North Huron Street. The Archives are an extremely valuable resources, containing pictures and information on significant persons, buildings, and events in Ypsilanti history. For more information, visit the Museum and Archives at 220 North Huron or call 482-4990.

II. The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation

is a membership organization chiefly interested in the architectural heritage of Ypsilanti — in other words, historic preservation. The Foundation was formed in 1974 to save the historic Towner House when it was under threat of demolition, and for a number of years the Foundation leased the house from its owner, the Presbyterian Church, and maintained the property. But the Foundations' purposes quickly expanded to the preservation of all historic structures in Ypsilanti through education. The Foundation is responsible for the 'historic structure' markers on may of our buildings, publication of an annual calendar featuring local historic structures, and bi-monthly education programs, open to non-members as well as members, concerning subjects related to history and preservation. *The Heritage News*, which promotes awareness of issues that relate to preservation, is published bimonthly from September to May, with an additional "Good News" edition that appears at Heritage Festival. The Foundation's major fund raiser is the annual Historic Home Tour, held during Heritage Festival each August. For more information, call Jack Harris at 485-2155.

III. The Historic District Commission

is a City administrative agency, created by City Council in 1978 to administer the Historic District Ordinance. The purpose of the ordinance is "to safeguard the heritage of the City of Ypsilanti by preserving a district which reflects elements of its cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history and natural environments; to stabilize and improve property values in such district; to foster civic beauty and pride; to strengthen the local economy; to promote the use of the historic district for the education, pleasure and welfare of the citizens of the City of Ypsilanti and of the State of Michigan; and, to encourage new buildings and development which will be harmonious with the existing historic buildings and neighborhoods but will not necessarily be of the same architectural style, the purpose being to develop the Historic District as a vital living area in which each succeeding generation may building with the quality and sensitivity of past generations." (see City Ordinance N. 496.) The Commission is composed of seven members, appointed by the Mayor with the concurrence of City Council, and serving without pay. The Commission meets twice a month to review all applications for building permits in the Historic District for work that will have an exterior effect. No work can begin until it has been approved by the Commission. All Commission members are residents of Ypsilanti; currently five members live in the Historic District and four of those own property in the District. HDC meetings are held in City Hall, the first and third Tuesday of the month and are open to the public. To confirm specific dates and times, call City Hall information, 483-1530.

Each of these organization makes unique and significant contributions to the preservation of Ypsilanti history. Working separately, yet together in commitment, these groups of dedicated local citizens have helped Ypsilanti not only survive but develop its image as a unique place with a proud history and a promising future. Their efforts are at the heart of our reputation as a city with an astonishing number of citizens who care.

Volunteers will want to jump at this chance to help out a Frog Island:

Correspond with David Gould
at The Ark
637 1/2 S. Main
Ann Arbor MI 48104
if you can help in the areas at right:

Friday, Saturday, Sunday:
- Security - patrol gates, fences, audience
- Gate workers - ticketing, wristbanding
- Maintenance - grounds crew
- Bar server - alcohol sales
- Bar wristbanding - check & sell permits
- T-shirt sales - sell t-shirts
- Hospitality - put out the chips
- Souvenir/info booth - sell souvenirs, assist patrons

Thursday and Monday: Set-up/Break-down

Support the merchants
DEPOT TOWN
UP YOUR YPSI
who support *The Rag*

June Specials:
Watch for Frog/Jazz/Green specials up and down the block this month in honor of the district's biggest and most loyal crowd of consumers!

Something's happening at 27 East Cross!
T•R•E•A•S•U•R•E•S
is joining
DESIGNS ON YOU
Quality resale • Clothing & Goods for men, women and children
Now accepting consignments
Call 482-2010 or stop in at 27 East Cross
Great infant & little boy things now available

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2800 East Michigan Ave.
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Farmers' Market
Open all year 'round
Wednesdays & Saturdays
In the Freighthouse
down in Depot Town

A Depot Town SAMPLER

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40 East Cross

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(313) 482-6373
16 E. Cross Street, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Visitor & Convention Bureau merger?

Concern raised over County Bureau

[CBC Monthly Newsletter, May 1992]

Consideration of a proposal to merge the Ypsilanti Area Visitors & Convention Bureau (VCB) has the local business community concerned. Currently being studied by a select committee of the Chamber, the idea of merging the two separate bureaus has been driven on the basis of cost-savings. The thinking being that there currently is some duplication of services that could be consolidated under a single bureau.

In addition to mere consolidation, such an entity would be enlarged into a county convention and visitors bureau. Neighboring communities such as Saline, Chelsea and Manchester would be included in such a plan.

Rather than the current 75/25 split of the accomodations room tax revenue, a county bureau would utilize 100% for its budget.

The Ypsilanti Press recently raised its own suspicions over the effect such a merger would have for the Ypsilanti community. As we know, VCB has been the resource through which Heritage Festival, Festival of Lights, Gus Macker Tournament and Drum Corp North were established. These local events bring nearly half a million visitors to the Ypsilanti area.

The amount of local VCB staff support that makes these events possible would be unlikely under a larger county wide bureaucracy. While some basic administrative cost savings might be realized, the question raised is at what price to our community? Joint efforts have and will continue between Ypsilanti's and Ann Arbor's bureaus. The real concern is whether a merger will provide more of what we need or less.

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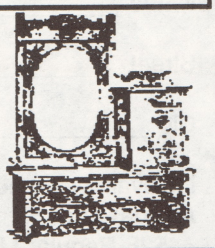

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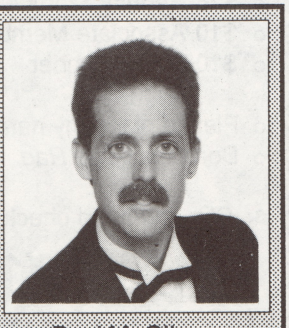
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